



THE POTOMAC SCHOOL



FRIDAY, JUNE 27, 2014

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE POTOMAC SCHOOL

Dear Parents, Alumni, and Friends of Potomac,

We write to report on the findings of the independent investigation conducted by the law firm of Debevoise & Plimpton into the abuse of Potomac students by former teacher and administrator Christopher Kloman. Almost seven months ago, The Potomac School Board of Trustees authorized this investigation following the sentencing of Kloman to 43 years in prison for the sexual abuse of five Potomac students in the 1960s and 1970s. The heart-wrenching and courageous testimony of the victims during that legal proceeding raised questions of whether Kloman had abused more children, and whether School officials had learned of the abuse. We asked the investigators to focus not only on whether there were additional victims but also on what school administrators, teachers, trustees, or parents knew about Kloman's actions at the time and what, if any, actions were taken in response. We hoped that by finding the truth, the School could provide the victims some measure of healing and also learn from the past.

Since December, Debevoise has conducted an extensive investigation of Kloman's tenure at Potomac. They reviewed school records and archives, and interviewed 240 individuals, including victims of Kloman's abuse and other former students; current and former faculty members, administrators, staff, and members of the Board of Trustees; and other witnesses. Debevoise also contacted over 700 individuals via email, phone, and US mail asking them to please come forward if they had any knowledge that might assist the investigation. We acknowledge here the great debt owed to those who helped the investigators. Given the sensitive and highly personal nature of the matters discussed by many as part of this process, we and the investigators have endeavored to preserve the privacy of individuals whenever possible.

Ultimately, the investigation found that Kloman's abuse of Potomac students, while varying in degree, extended to more victims than those identified during the legal proceedings. It also seems clear that the School learned of some credible allegations of sexual misconduct at the time and directed Kloman to attend counseling, but these actions did not succeed in stopping the abuse or protecting its students. Additionally, the investigators heard reports alleging misconduct of varying kinds by other former employees at the School. Although the investigators were able to corroborate only some of these reports, we will share all of the information with law enforcement officials.

We are deeply disturbed by what was found. Parents and society as a whole place their faith in educators to care for students and keep them safe, yet these children were hurt and their trust was betrayed. The investigation leaves little doubt: cherished Potomac values were ignored, and the School failed in its duty to safeguard the health and well-being of these students. The key findings of the Debevoise investigation and the Board of Trustees' recommendations for next steps are below.

On behalf of The Potomac School Board of Trustees and the entire community, we offer a sincere and heartfelt apology to the victims as well as their families and friends. Our hearts are heavy with the knowledge that they came to harm at Potomac. We recognize that the passing of time has done little to ease their pain. We have spoken personally with many victims to hear their stories and offer support. Though we cannot correct the wrongs of the past, we pledge to do our utmost to protect the safety of our students. Potomac has absolutely no tolerance for inappropriate student-teacher relations; rest assured that if we learn of misconduct, we will act immediately. To that

end, please know that any abuse or misconduct can be reported to the investigators and Potomac at any time.

At the request of the Board of Trustees, we are currently working with professional consultants who evaluate risk in schools to conduct a safety audit of all our programs and policies. In the past year, we have strengthened our system of criminal background checks of staff, faculty, tutors, and contractors. Last fall, officials with the state's Child Protective Services division trained employees on signs of abuse and neglect and how to report disclosures of abuse. Later this summer, faculty and staff will be trained on appropriate adult-student boundaries in personal contacts and social media.

This work does not have an endpoint, as we are committed to doing what is right and just by our students, whether past, present, or future.

Sincerely,



H. Lawrence Culp, Jr.
Chair, Board of Trustees



John Kowalik
Head of School

KEY FINDINGS

Overall Findings

The investigation focused on determining the scope and extent of Kloman's misconduct while employed at Potomac; what the School knew, and what steps it took in response; and any other allegations of misconduct brought to the investigators' attention. This summary is based on the facts gathered and offers what conclusions can be supported by those facts.

As noted above, the investigators spoke to 240 individuals, including victims of Kloman's abuse and other former students; current and former teachers, administrators, staff, and members of the Board of Trustees; and witnesses believed to have relevant information. In total, investigators contacted over 700 individuals via email, phone, and US mail asking them to come forward if they had any knowledge that might assist the investigation. Investigators also reviewed all available documentation relating to Kloman; personnel and disciplinary files for other teachers; Board of Trustees' meeting minutes; alumni development files; yearbooks and other materials from the School archives; and publicly available materials from the press, the criminal proceedings, and the internet.

The investigators found strong evidence that twenty-six former Potomac students were victims of sexual abuse by Kloman, in addition to the five victims who were the subject of Kloman's guilty plea and criminal conviction. Kloman's abuse ranged from inappropriate touching to rape. The investigation found that over many years, various members of the Potomac School community—including Heads of School, high-level School administrators, teachers, and Board Chairs—were aware, either directly or indirectly, of at least some information concerning inappropriate conduct by Kloman. The investigators did not, however, find evidence that any parent, Potomac employee, or member of the Board of Trustees had any sense whatsoever of the breadth or severity of Kloman's misconduct. The majority of the victims never told anyone about the misconduct until years later, and those individuals with knowledge did not share widely what they knew.

The investigators also received reports concerning other former Potomac employees who were alleged to have engaged in misconduct of varying kinds. They were able to corroborate only some of these reports. Regardless, the

School will share all of this information with law enforcement.

Christopher Kloman

Christopher Kloman was employed by Potomac from 1965 until 1994, from ages 26 to 55. While at Potomac, he taught history, geography, and math and was a seventh grade homeroom teacher. Kloman held administrator positions from 1974 until he was terminated in 1994. He served as Head of the Upper School (then grades 7-9) from 1976-1987. When the tenth through twelfth grades were added in 1987, Kloman became Head of the Intermediate School (grades 7-8), his position until his termination in 1994.

In the course of their work, the investigators learned that there were more victims than had been publicly identified in the criminal investigation. The reports of abuse were primarily from students who were at Potomac between the years of 1966 and the early 1980s. There was only one report from the 1990s, but the investigators were not able to corroborate it and also received information inconsistent with that report.

The investigators received reports of acts ranging from inappropriate touching to rape. Some female students, including those who did not experience any inappropriate conduct by Kloman, said that they were uncomfortable around Kloman and considered him someone to avoid. Several male students from that time reported that Kloman used bullying tactics and was a harsh disciplinarian. In contrast, other former female students with whom the investigators spoke said they had admired and liked Kloman as a teacher and administrator and were unaware of any sexual abuse. Although Kloman abused many students, the majority of people with whom the investigators spoke expressed shock at the news of Kloman's arrest and subsequent conviction.

Potomac Administration Knowledge of Kloman's Abuse of Students

The majority of the victims with whom the investigators spoke reported that, at the time of the abuse, they did not tell anyone what happened. Many students said they never even considered telling their parents, let alone any individuals at the School.

Kloman worked under six different Heads of School at Potomac. The weight of the evidence—including witness statements, Kloman's own admissions as revealed through the prosecutor at his plea hearing, and the available documentation—indicates that Kloman's abuse of Potomac students was directly reported to two Heads of School in the 1970s. The evidence gathered suggests that two, and perhaps three, subsequent Heads of School had a concern or were aware of rumors that Kloman may have in the past behaved inappropriately. Over the years, it appears that other adults at the School, including several trustees and employees, learned of the rumors, and a few were told firsthand of the abuse by a victim.

It appears that the School first received a report of Kloman's sexual misconduct around 1970, after at least two students, and possibly a third, were abused by Kloman. There is strong evidence that the parents of at least one of the students, and possibly two, reported the incident to the Head of School, who directed Kloman to attend counseling. With the benefit of hindsight, this step was grossly inadequate, even though at the time it was apparently considered an effective course of action and discipline. This Head of School is deceased and the investigators were not able to confirm whether this incident or incidents were reported to the subsequent Head of School or other administrators.

There is also strong evidence that a separate incident of misconduct was reported to a different Head of School by a victim's parents later in the 1970s and that Kloman was once more directed to attend counseling in response. Details of what was reported to the Head of School are not known, but it seems fairly clear that the Head of School should have understood from the report that Kloman engaged in inappropriate sexual conduct with a female student. The investigators heard secondhand reports that Kloman was apologetic and remorseful when confronted with these allegations. They spoke with this Head of School, who denied having learned that Kloman engaged in sexual misconduct with a student. However, several other sources confirmed that the incident was reported to the Head of School and that Kloman was again directed to attend counseling.

The investigators also concluded that 1) a Head of School in the 1990s learned there was an allegation of earlier sexual misconduct by Kloman, and 2) Kloman's misconduct was likely an unstated factor in the decision to terminate him, along with the view that Kloman's work performance was inadequate. The evidence suggests that at least some members of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees at that time knew of rumors that Kloman had acted inappropriately with students. One of these trustees wrote letters of recommendation supporting Kloman, although the individual claimed not to have known at that time that the misconduct was sexual in nature. There is no evidence that School officials notified potential future employers of the reports of Kloman's misconduct. There also is no evidence that knowledge of Kloman's misconduct was widespread at the time; in fact, when Kloman was terminated, there was strong opposition from many members of the Potomac community, including the Intermediate School faculty, nearly all of whom signed a letter in support of him.

Furthermore, the evidence suggests that during and after Kloman's employment at Potomac several other administrators and teachers learned of his misconduct. The investigators have reason to believe there were employees who were aware, at the very least, of rumors that Kloman had engaged in inappropriate sexual behavior with at least one female student. Some may have only been aware that Kloman engaged in boundary-crossing physical behavior like touching or roughhousing, which they did not interpret as sexual abuse at the time. The investigators found that most were aware of only one incident, some years earlier, in which Kloman was alleged to have behaved inappropriately with a student.

The investigators considered the question of how Kloman's sexual misconduct could have continued for as long as it did without widespread knowledge among the community or more forceful discipline by the School's Heads. They have concluded that there were a number of contributing factors: Very few of the victims told anyone about the abuse they suffered at the time; there was a much different level of understanding and communication about pedophilia and sexual misconduct in the 1960s and 1970s; Kloman occupied a position of power and trust at the School and he and his family were generally very well-liked; and these types of issues were typically handled discretely by schools, in part to protect the reputation of the school, but also to protect the identity of victims, often at the victim's or parents' request for confidentiality. To be clear, these factors do not excuse the School's inadequate response to reports and rumors of Kloman's sexual misconduct of Potomac students over the years.

The investigators found no evidence that anyone who received reports about Kloman contacted law enforcement.

Other Former Potomac Employees

The investigators received and evaluated credible allegations of sexual misconduct reported to previous School administrations concerning four other former employees at Potomac. The investigators believe most of these cases were dealt with appropriately by School leadership; the allegations were investigated at the time they were raised and the employees were dismissed in a timely manner. In one instance, however, the investigators concluded that additional action would have been warranted, including referral of the allegations to authorities. Also, the School could have done more to investigate the allegations or closely monitor and restrict the actions of an employee in question. It is troubling that the investigators found no evidence that the School had a clear, strict policy that it would not provide letters of recommendation to employees who were dismissed as a result of sexual or other misconduct. Nor does it appear that the School had a policy to notify subsequent employers about credible reports of the employee's misconduct, a critical communication when a terminated employee continues to work with students or in a school setting.

The investigators also heard credible allegations that, based on available evidence, had never been reported to the School. These reports involved three former Potomac employees who allegedly engaged in misconduct that included inappropriate sexual behavior with students. The investigators were not able to fully corroborate these new allegations for various reasons, including the death of the employee in question, the passage of time, or lack of firsthand information about the alleged misconduct. In reporting on these new allegations here, the investigators and the School are mindful both of the need to protect the privacy of the potential victims as well as the rights of the former employees involved. Nevertheless, as noted above, the School will share its information with law enforcement

authorities.

To be clear: No allegations were raised against today's faculty or staff members.

POTOMAC'S RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

At the recommendation of the Board of Trustees, Potomac is conducting a comprehensive review of School policies regarding student-adult interaction and any issues relating to employee misconduct. While this review includes specific recommendations made by the investigators, the School has also retained outside consultants to analyze what it does to protect and support our students. Through this work, we want to enhance safeguards for students and ensure that the School handles misconduct with integrity and the interests of students uppermost in mind

Here is a summary of steps taken this past year and planned for the near future:

- Virginia state officials trained staff and faculty on signs of child abuse and neglect and how to report disclosures of abuse. Potomac mandates that its employees report any disclosure of physical or sexual abuse, in accordance with Virginia law and the guidelines of the state's Child Protective Services.
- This summer, faculty and staff will be trained on best practices to establish appropriate boundaries with students in terms of personal contact and social media.
- The School ensured that all employees have had criminal background checks, which include searches of FBI records, sex-offender registries, and county and state court records. These checks will be repeated every three years.
- The School introduced criminal background checks for tutors working on site. These checks will be conducted every three years. Background checks on contract workers are conducted annually.
- Beginning this fall, Potomac will conduct criminal background checks on parent volunteers whose work regularly brings them into close contact with a child.
- The School will formalize its policies regarding the termination of employees for sexual or other misconduct. It will include strict, clear language prohibiting the School from providing letters of recommendation or references to potential employers in these situations
- There is much already in place that we can draw from to strengthen the School. Potomac works hard to create a learning environment where every student is cared for and watched over by teachers, administrators, and peers. Our extensive system of advisors and counselors aim to make sure every student is truly known.
- Finally, Potomac as a community is committed to values of respect, integrity, and caring. These must be the guideposts of every decision we make as we assess the past and look to the future.

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